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## UK Regulators Challenge Google's Search Dominance in Push for Greater Market Competition

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The UK's Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) is considering major reforms that could compel Google to offer consumers the ability to choose rival search engines, a move that could reshape the digital landscape and reduce the tech giant's near-monopoly on online search.

Under a new digital competition regime, the CMA has the authority to intervene when a company is deemed to hold “strategic market status”, a designation that does not imply misconduct, but signals potential risk to fair competition. Google currently controls over 90% of the UK’s search engine market and serves as a vital advertising platform for approximately 200,000 British businesses, who spend an average of £33,000 annually on Google search ads.

While the regulator has not accused Google of anti-competitive practices, it has proposed a series of targeted measures to increase transparency and consumer choice. These include the implementation of “choice screens” that would allow users to select from a variety of search engines, as well as clearer rules and controls for publishers whose content appears in Google’s search results.

“Google Search has delivered tremendous benefits,” said CMA Chief Executive Sarah Cardell. “However, our investigation suggests there are ways to make these markets more open, competitive, and innovative. The changes we’re considering are proportionate and designed to empower both consumers and businesses.”

Google has responded cautiously, describing the CMA’s suggestions as “broad and unfocused.” A spokesperson warned that the proposals could have “significant implications for businesses and consumers in the UK,” and noted that the country has “historically benefitted from early access” to many of Google’s technological innovations, a trend that could shift under stricter regulation.

Industry feedback has highlighted the potential complexities and unintended consequences of such reforms. EasyJet, for example, reported that similar measures introduced in the European Union redirected users to third-party travel websites, which often misrepresented pricing and services. Meanwhile, companies like LoveHoney and Ann Summers raised concerns that Google’s SafeSearch filter restricts their visibility in search results, despite their content being entirely legal and intended for adult consumers.

Trade body UK Hospitality has advised caution, suggesting that implementing EU-style digital regulations may create more problems than solutions, particularly for smaller enterprises.

The CMA launched its investigation into Google in January 2025 and plans to make a final decision in October. If the proposed measures are adopted, they could significantly alter the

way users access online information in the UK and reduce the overwhelming reliance on a single search platform.

The outcome could set a precedent not only for digital markets regulation in the UK but also for how global tech giants operate in increasingly scrutinized markets.